

9. ATTEMPT BY A CATTLE EGRET *BUBULCUS IBIS COROMANDUS*
TO FEED ON AN ADULT HOUSE SHREW *SUNCUS MURINUS* (LINN.)

On March 17, 2000, around 1600 hrs, I heard the frantic squeaking of a house shrew *Suncus murinus* (Linn.) coming from the paddy fields adjacent to my house. A cattle egret was seen making vigorous attempts to catch something, which was not visible to me. On scanning the spot through my binoculars, I found to my utter surprise that it was a full grown house shrew, trying to escape. By then, the egret had somehow managed to catch the shrew. Then something went wrong and the shrew in a bid to defend itself got hold of the lower mandible of the egret in its mouth. The puzzled egret ran

here and there, jerking its neck to free itself from the shrew. The egret had to work hard to free its beak. The shrew, though injured, escaped.

As per Ali and Ripley (1987), the food of cattle egret consists chiefly of insects and to a lesser extent of tadpoles, frogs and lizards, but there is no mention of any mammal species in its diet.

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REFERENCE

ALI, S. & S.D. RIPLEY (1987): Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, 2nd edn. (Reprint 1989). Oxford University Press, Delhi.

10. OCCURRENCE OF NORTHERN SHOVELLER *ANAS CLYPEATA* LINN.
IN KOLE WETLANDS OF THRISSUR, KERALA

The Kole wetlands in Thrissur district are one of the important wintering grounds for migratory birds coming to Kerala. The area lies between 10° 20'-10° 40' N and 75° 58'-76° 11' E, extending over about 11,000 ha. Kole wetlands are situated below sea level and paddy is cultivated during October to April, after draining the water. During monsoon (June to September) the whole area is inundated. As part of ecological studies on wetland birds initiated in 1998, we have been surveying the area regularly. During these surveys a flock of 28 northern shoveller *Anas clypeata* Linn. was recorded on December 15, 1999 along with a group of 1,656 garganey *Anas querquedula* (Bluewinged teal). Twenty individuals were sighted again in the same place on December 21, 1999, after which the birds were not sighted in the locality,

because the area was drained for paddy cultivation.

Only a few sight records of the northern shoveller are reported from Kerala. Recently, Zacharias and Gaston (1993) have reported the species from Wynaad. Ali (1984) and Neelakantan *et al.* (1993) have not reported the species from Kerala and according to Zacharias and Gaston (1993), Ali omitted the species by error. This is the second area-specific report of the species from Kerala and also confirms the earlier observation of Ali and Ripley (1983) that the northern shoveller was found in small parties in association with garganey.

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